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[Title Page]

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FOOD PRODUCTION AND KINDRED MATTERS AMONGST THE LUO.

By Archdeacon W. E. Owen.

(Paper read at the 3rd Annual Scientific Meeting held in Nov., 1933.)

Soil.

134 The production of food must necessarily be associated with knowledge of the soil. The principal soil varieties here have been named by the Luo, and the methods appropriate to each variety are well known. Black cotton soil, called "apwong," occurs over a wide area, mainly around the lake shores, and is conspicuous in the locations of Uyoma, Kanyidwanya, Kanjonga and the Kano Plains. Red earth, called "lwala," is, speaking generally, found further back from the lake, on the higher lands, and is to be found over wide tracts in Central and South Kavirondo, a notable location being North Gem, in Central Kavirondo. Sandy soil, called "kweyo," is generally found in the neighbourhood of outcrops of granite, which is a prominent feature in many parts. The locations of Asembo in Central Kavirondo, and Suna in South Kavirondo are good examples of areas where this sandy soil is abundant. Murram, called "go" when solid and "go" when disintegrated into a soil, occurs in places all over the country, Sakwa and Alego in particular providing many examples of it. Stony soil, called "kite," is to be found over large stretches, particularly in those neighbourhoods where escarpments rise from the regions round the lake. Through the labour involved in the cultivation of this stony soil is very great, where there is pressure of population, every available patch is made to produce food.

Rainfall.

132 Over certain sections of the country rainfall is very uncertain. The worst locations in this respect are lower Gem, Uyoma, Sakwa, Kadimo, parts of Asembo, Miwanda, Kanjonga and Ramogo. In other districts rainfall is abundant, running from forty to sixty five inches in the year, well distributed over the months, with the exception of January and early February. January is reckoned to be the driest month of the year, and is the month when there is most relaxation from agricultural operations, this being the favourite time for the inter-clan wrestling matches.

[132] 137 Contrary to what many would expect, amongst people who periodically suffer from lack of rain, the Luo have developed no system of rain makers. At the top of Usenge Hill in Kadimo, there is still 138 to be seen a site marked by a collection of native pots, where the local

elders gathered to offer sacrifice and supplicate the local spirit, together with the clan spirits, in times of great drought, but this is entirely different from the rain-making cult. Even in this instance, it is doubtful whether the ceremony has not been influenced in large measure by the neighbouring Bantu peoples. The particular guardian spirit of the hill, is reputed to be a fabulously big snake, so enormous as to be able to encircle the hill with its body. Away from the Lake shore, which suffers most from uncertain rainfall, the Luo account very easily for the fact that they have no rain-makers. They simply say that they never have lack of rain, so why should they have rain-makers.

But though they have no rain-makers, they have a term for rain-maker, whom they call " Jajimb koth." When they need a rain-maker they employ either a Bantu from the Banakwe clan of the Banyole, or one from Mudhiero, Yiro in Maraba. And, of course, it is not alone for agriculture that rain is needed. The fishing in the rivers suffers greatly when the rivers run low, and fishermen not infrequently call in the aid of the rain-maker. On the lower reaches of the Nzoia River, there existed a custom now happily extinct, according to which human sacrifice was made to the spirit of the river. The unfortunate person to be sacrificed was a girl, generally a young one and ill-favoured, who was bound, and some accounts say stunned, before being cast into the river. Rain-makers still flourish, though shorn of much of their influence and tribute. Only a few years ago I was in Uyoma during a time of rain shortage. I happened to be collecting genealogies, and was visiting the old men for this purpose. The conversation turned on the lack of rain, and I asked had they sent for the rain-maker. I really did not expect that they would have done so, and was somewhat surprised to find that they had sent their offerings to one of the Bantu of the Banakwe clan. It seemed a pity that they should waste their substance on what could do them no earthly good, so I spent some time trying to convince them that the rain-maker had no power to bring rain. They listened very politely, but at the end of it were " of the same opinion still." I left them gently poking fun at them for being so credulous. I was about a mile or less from my camp, and during my walk home, suddenly, from nowhere, clouds rushed up, a violent rain storm pelted down and I got thoroughly drenched. I would have given a good deal to have been able to listen to the comments of those who had heard so politely my well-meant arguments. Incidents somewhat like this are, no doubt, responsible for the deep seated faith in the rain-makers' powers. It did not convince me.

The preparation of the soil for the seed was, and is, performed without any ceremony of invocation preceding it, except when the land had been taken in conquest from enemies. In the latter case the

24l 791 " Jabilo " or leading medicine-man of the community concerned performed a sacrifice or " misango " the purpose of which was to render ineffectual any harmful magic left behind in the soil by those from whom it had been taken. It occasionally happens even to-day that a cultivator will suspect that an enemy has buried " yath " or harmful medicine in a field. In this case no preparation of the soil of this field for a crop is begun until a diviner has been consulted in order to find out the enemy. The Luo have a great faith in the power of the diviner to discover an enemy. That the diviner denounces people, and that he is oft times right, cannot be denied. Sometimes it may be guess work, as when there has been a notorious quarrel and it is simple to suspect the other party in the quarrel, but at times the medicine man has more certain sources of information. In the year 1910 I had the good fortune to get into rather friendly relationships with a medicine man who had become a Christian. In one of our conversations I asked him how it was possible to divine a wrongdoer. He told me that it was generally very easy. If a man wished to put down medicine, he had to procure it from a medicine man. Or, if he proposed to rob his neighbour he applied to the medicine man for protective medicine. Following upon the injury or the robbery, the injured party applied to the local medicine man in order to find out the enemy. If the injured person was prepared to pay a fee exceeding that paid by the enemy, the medicine man had no scruples about giving his client away. But I do not say that this is a complete explanation of all the powers of divination exercised by medicine men. Still, there can be no doubt that often both parties consult the same diviner, just as at times in our own social life both parties to a lawsuit will approach the same lawyer. Perhaps I had better safeguard myself. I am not, please, to be understood as implying that a lawyer will give his client away.

24l In the preparation of the soil for the crop, all members of the family who are fit, take their share. Only in bush country, where there is heavy clearing to be done, is the work left to the men. This operation is called " keto." In all other types of land there is no discrimination between the sexes, even where tall-grass, called " olenge," has to be dug up. But there is a certain amount of discrimination amongst the age groups. When a man has advanced in 24l 867 years, and younger members of his family are sufficient for food production, he leaves it to them, while he devotes himself to less arduous tasks, possibly herding, or some form of social service such as the elders perform in settling the lawsuits of the clan.

24l The next operation after "keto " is " puro," the turning over of the soil. Where weeds or grass have been heavy, this is followed by " wang'o " or burning. In sandy, stony or red soil, sowing the seed

24¶ ...sown next, but in cotton soil, there is further preparation by breaking up the clods, getting a fine tilth. This is called " bum." I well remember my surprise, and critical attitude, when first I noticed that sowing was done without any attempt being made to break up the rough grass-matted clods. However, the crop, which happened to be " bel " or millet, which resulted from these primitive methods, was, a heavy one. I was told that the clods afforded protection to the young seedlings.

With regard to the sowing or planting three terms are used. Broadcast sowing, as of millet, simsim and beans, is called " chwoyo " or " bolo." The planting of each seed individually, as with maize, is termed " kumo," while the planting of cassava and sweet potatoes is known as " pilho."

24 Under the system now fast dying out, sowing was surrounded by many taboos. First of all, was the knowing the time to sow. In
¶5 a normal year there are two sowings, one in the early part of the
821 year, February or March, and one during the shorter rains about September-October. The slower growing crops were put down in the spring, and the quicker crops in the autumn. For the spring sowing guidance was sought from the stars. Amongst a people who had no names for the months of the year, natural phenomena had to be relied upon. These the stars supplied, and especially the constellations of Orion and the Pleiades. These two constellations are called by one name " Yogini " by the Luo. They further differentiate by calling the three stars of Orion's belt, the " chwo " or " men," and the cluster of the Pleiades the " mon " or " women." (The men are obviously polygamists.) When the time of the year comes round during which these stars are observed shortly after nightfall, to be about midway between the zenith and the horizon, then they know that sowing time has arrived. No matter how good the rains may have been before these stars reach the traditional position none must sow, and, conversely, if rains do not come by the time the stars say that sowing ought to be done, there are dismal forebodings about the crop. The Luo say that if the millet (their main food crop), has not flowered by the month when these stars dip below the horizon shortly after nightfall, then there will be a poor harvest and scarcity of food.

24¶ Other natural phenomena which guide them are birds. There is
825 a bird called by the Luo " Ondiek ti oyieng " (" the wild beasts are well fed ") which has a very monotonous three note cry. Some Europeans call it the brain fever bird, from the deadly monotony of this call. The Luo have given words to this cry " Dak to kom " meaning " Aren't you going to sow to-day." There is another bird, called " Olwoh go apul " which follows behind the digger for the insects turned up with the soil. The presence of these birds is held to

241 826 indicate that sowing time is at hand. In the autumn, there is the ordinary African kite, which comes over literally, at times, in thousands, feeding in the air, and on the ground on the swarms of flying ants. Some withhold their sowing until these birds appear.

241 782 In exceptional cases an important sacrifice, called " kilo " was performed before sowing took place. If the " Jadwong' kilo " was warned in a dream of impending disaster to the coming season's food supply, he called the elders of the community together for the purpose of the ceremony. " Kilo " was performed to avert any disaster threatening the community. It was always performed in the early morning, before the cattle had gone out to graze. The present " Jakilo " in Sakwa location performed the ceremony of " kilo " in 1931 when the people of Sakwa had a boundary dispute with their neighbours of Asembo. He performed it again in the early months of 1932 to get rid of the locusts. It is natural that not a few in Sakwa attribute the absence of locusts this year to the effect of this ceremony.

241 177 [924] When the time was ripe for sowing, the " Mikayi " or chief wife of the head of the community, was always the first to sow. None dare begin their sowing until the " mikayi " had thus given permission. Any who were so bold as to begin before the " mikayi " were made to feel the displeasure of the community. As recently as 1931 I have known a man to come under discipline for sowing too soon. But what with the efforts of the Agricultural Department, pressing upon the people the wisdom of early sowing, together with a widespread knowledge of the course of the months, re-inforced by the rise of individualism, accompanied by the breakdown of tribal authority, the influence of the " mikayi " is steadily waning. Amongst the more advanced sections of the communities it has ceased to exist, and they are no longer subject to discipline for early sowing. After sowing comes a pause, but not for long. About April weeding begins. This is shared in by all. Amongst the shorter crops, it is done by the hoe, but in crops like the small millet, called " kal," the seed is sown too closely for there to be room for a hoe, so it has to be done by hand, the workers squatting down on their heels and pulling up the weeds. This results in a much trampled crop, but it very soon recovers, and suffers no damage. In recent years the Administration has made great efforts to get people to eradicate the striga weed, called by the Luo " Loyenge." This weed shoots up, curiously enough, after the customary weeding has been done. The Luo let it grow in spite of the fact that they know that land infested with it must be left for a term of years. I have over and over again tried to persuade them of the wisdom and benefit of getting rid of it, but to no avail. Anything which comes after the routine weeding has been done is allowed to remain.

24 Besides weeding, there is much to be done to protect the crop.
[78] Red storms do a lot of damage at times, and to prevent the crops a "medicine" is employed called "mipelo mapelo pe." This consists of herbs tied in a bunch to the top of a pole about 6-8 feet high, which is stuck in the middle of the field. (Herdsmen too, use this [150] to keep themselves dry while out with the cattle, and I have seen a herdsman accompanying the cows with these herbs tied to the top [67] of his spear.) Except in time of famine, stealing from the crop is unknown, which contrasts favourably with complaints made from time to time that Natives steal maize and coffee from European farms. In their own community such an offence is practically unknown. But free-legged depredators are a serious problem in certain localities. 24 Fields are enclosed in fences of the branches of thorn trees, laid on 97 the ground, and these do give a certain protection against wild pigs, 134 monkeys and baboons. But they are of no use against hippo and elephant. To protect crops, mainly sweet potato, against the hippo it is the practice to erect a small temporary hut, which is occupied at night by a guard armed with a couple of spears. It must be a weary business, for the potatoes are cultivated close to the lake edge where mosquitoes swarm, so between the hippo and the mosquitoes the guard [124] must have a trying time. In old days before the Game laws came in, organised hunts were held, which were very successful.

241 The most difficult animal is, of course, the elephant. These have 136 disappeared from Central Kavirondo but still infest districts like Mirembe and Sakwa in South Kavirondo. They can do heavy damage both to millet and sweet potato. The beating of pots and pans is tried to scare away the elephant, while occasionally the more daring venture forth from the hut to throw stones or otherwise drive away the beasts. This is an operation attended with peril in the dark of the night, and occasionally lives are lost in this way. Lives too are lost through guards mistaking their fellow guards for wild animals. Ash, one of the most famous of ancestors of the Luo, is said to have lost his life in this way. The story is that before going off to drink beer, he told his sons to go on guard in the field that night. They refused to his face, but when he had gone thought better of it, and went on guard. He returned from the beer drink, and went to see what was happening in the field, believing that there was no guard. He soon mistook his footsteps, for that of a pig, and speared him with fatal results. Similar things still occur from time to time.

24 Birds, especially weaver birds, are a pest on the grain crop 136 again. Scarecrows are employed, both mechanical and human. Of 157 the former an inverted cooking pot on the top of a short pole is a common device. Boys are employed in large numbers when the birds are most troublesome, and their harsh cries are quite a part of the

life of the countryside. Offshoots the boys are armed with slings from which stones are projected at random into the midst of the crop, or into the midst of a flock of birds as they rise. One of the reasons why the Luo dislike the land of towns is because they give harbourage to their bird enemies.

They are wise to insect pests also, and have a greater belief in their remedies than many a farmer has in the aids supplied by our civilisation. The medicine is called by two names, "yath miet" or "yath lwaro." It is employed against a small red and black beetle, called by the Luo "Nyangenya" which eats the flower of the millet, thus preventing a crop. The medicine man who prepares it must be a man of peaceable disposition and character, not a quarreller or disputer with his neighbours. The whole success of the medicine depends on the absence of disputation and quarrelling, and of the grosser forms of vice, like adultery. No adulterer may be supplied with the medicine, for his very handling of it would nullify its usefulness, not only for himself, but also for his neighbours. All must be peace in the community until the harvest is reaped. Unlike other medicines, which are tied to a pole and left to work their influence, "yath miet" is made into a decoction, which is sprinkled over the growing crop at eventide. I have seen the operation at a place called Maranda in Nakwa, Central Kavirondo. It was then being used against maize borer. At a time when the pest was giving a good deal of trouble to European farmers, I heard a man who was back in the Reserve on leave from a farm in the Kitale district, pour scorn on the methods used by Europeans with various sprays. He was by way of being one of the more progressive men, but he had nothing but absolute faith in the efficacy of "yath miet."

Crops damaged by domestic stock gave rise to many an angry passion. The owner of the crop had liberty to chastise personally the herdboy (or man) through whose carelessness the stock were left unattended. If the herd were a lad he could be cuffed and thumped without being able to proceed against the assailant. Nor did the father protest, provided the chastisement were in reason, for he knew that his son had rendered him liable to a claim for compensation. As likely as not he would add his own quota to the punishment already meted out. If the owner feared that he would get the worst of it in a personal encounter with a herdsman, then he had his remedy at law.

When the crop is ready for harvesting it is the duty of the men to do the reaping. In the case of millet, this is a laborious business, calling for judgment, for not all the heads would be ripe, and some must be left to ripen after the bulk has been reaped. It is the task of the women and children to pack the crop into the grain baskets and carry it to the grain stores. In the case of millet it is quite

24] common to allow some of the standing roots to spring up again and give a second crop. I have seen some very fine heads of grain as a result of this method.

25] 57] The crop is stored, unthreshed if millet or maize, in large basket-like receptacles, covered with thatch and standing on stones or supported on forked sticks across which a rough platform is made. It is the work of the man to prepare the grain stores, and I suppose that there is no more prolific source of domestic bickering than these supply. Some men are shiftless, and leave off the preparation of the stores until near to harvest, sometimes exhausting in so doing the patience of the wife. Or he may be neglectful, and leave the thatch unrepaired, rendering the grain liable to suffer from the weather. Many women would far rather see the living hut left in disrepair than that the grain should be imperilled.

25] 26] The store varies in size according to the grain for which it is intended. The large size is for millet and maize, the small for the small millet and simsim. The Luo name for them is " dero." The large stores run up to six feet high by about six feet in diameter. The small about four feet by three. They are made from swamp reeds built in a very coarse basket-work fashion, and are finished off with a coating of cow dung inside. The better made stores have provision for access to the grain, by the simple device of cutting away a section from the top of the side, just under the thatch. It used to be the custom for a present of a small basket of grain to be given to the Jakilo or medicine man, after harvest. This custom has already died out in many places.

[93] 96] 24] 96] It was the woman's first care to secure seed for the next year. Millet and maize was hung in the head, sometimes outside from the branch of a tree, more frequently from the roof of the hut. Smaller grain, and beans were stored in pots in the living hut, and to ensure their being kept in good condition, it was the woman's duty to empty the contents of the pots periodically onto a " thigo " or large circular flat basket work tray, or some part of the courtyard swept clean, that the sun might keep them dry. Lack of seed, owing to a planting dying off from lack of rain was a serious matter. Seed was then begged from neighbours more fortunate.

96] 95] Not all the grain went into the common store, for all the cultivation was by no means the common united effort of all the members of the family. The main effort of the members was put into the fields from which all were to draw their food supply, but in addition individual members had their own plots which are called " mondo." The head of the family would have his own " mondo," and the grain from this went into a separate store. This grain formed a reserve in

case of the main store being depleted. Grown up unmarried sons and also daughters could have each his or her own "mundo." In case of necessity their grain went into the family store, but from it they were allowed to barter grain for the personal ornaments which were common in the tribe. Grain which was still in store when the new crop came in was at the disposal of the woman, who frequently used it in barter for domestic animals. This custom is called "rundo," and the beast procured, if a cow or heifer is called "dier tekre." It was the woman's own property, subject to the limitations of absolute ownership which pertain to all notions of property among primitive peoples. It could not be bequeathed away from her by her husband. In case of famine she could take of its offspring and barter it for grain. Once having acquired the beast she did not readily part with it, but kept it for her children.

As at the present day so also in days gone by, there was no tribal organization of food supplies as a provision against famine. During the last two or three years when crops have been short through damage by locusts there has been one word which was heard very frequently. The word is "kimma." It means to journey away from the home locality in search of food for the family. In days gone by domestic animals were taken to those who had food to dispose of, and bartered for grain. A man without stock would marry off his girl child, and with the cattle get food. This was the only way in which famine conditions were met. Needless to say when famine was widespread, very much suffering was entailed.

Rotation of crops is practised to a limited extent. The order of rotation is decided largely, by the period of the year in which the first crop is put down. If virgin or fallow land is prepared for the autumn sowing, then the first crop is one which ripens quickly, such as simsim or lonna. When this is harvested, the land will be put under a slower growing crop, like millet or maize. Before being allowed to revert to fallow land, it may be put under sweet potatoes. If the land is first prepared for the spring sowing then the order is reversed. But it must not be taken that what has been written above is the invariable rule. I have known a field to be put down first in sweet potatoes and then followed by a second crop of potatoes before being planted with maize. Also where the land is very rich, as in certain valleys, year after year maize or millet may be put down until the land shows signs of exhaustion. It then reverts to fallow. There is no strict rule governing the length of time it rests. Some allow a rest of three, some of five years. It depends upon the amount of land available and the pressure of population upon it.

The names used by the Luo for the different phases are as follow:— Virgin soil, "Obuyg." Land under rotation, "Tung." Fallow

242. land, "Mbwa." A piece of land used infested in the middle of cultivation is called "sino," and the Loo are alive to the menace this neglected patch is to the crops surrounding it. A man who allows "sino" to endanger his neighbours' crops is very unpopular.

[678]

STATUS OF WOMEN:

SL2. 773 The position of women amongst the Loo is one of great influence, in spite of many things which show that they are not regarded as the equal of the men. While they have nothing in their creation stories which gives the male such pre-eminence as is given in the Hebrew account of creation in the second chapter of Genesis, yet even in their stories it is the male which is created first. The origin of the female is surrounded with mystery, none have any clear account of her origin. But it is significant that the name by which the first woman is known to many of the Loo is ALOO. LOO or LOWO is the term meaning earth or soil, and there is undoubtedly some connection in their minds between the fruitful soil and woman. But though her origin is surrounded in mystery, she was in some to carry the responsibility for the fact that the sons of men have got to work. Lest the story should be unknown to some it is worth while repeating it here. According to the creation story, the first man to be created was one called Pudho. To him the Creator (called Nyanaye) gave a magic hoe, which worked by itself, requiring no arm to wield it. With the hoe Nyanaye gave Pudho a command that he was never to attempt to do any work with it himself. If he should disobey this command then the hoe would lose its virtue and cease to work unaided. This happened before the advent of ALOO (sometimes called also MIHAHA). When eventually Pudho was given ALOO, he gave the hoe over to her care, telling her at the same time of the command which Nyanaye had laid down. For a time all went well. When they wanted any digging to be done all they had to do was to take the hoe out to the site, show it what they wanted it to dig and leave it to do the work. In the evening it was brought in again. But one day curiosity was too much for ALOO. She felt that she must feel what it was like to turn up a few sods. So she picked up the hoe and with it turned up a little soil. Then becoming suddenly afraid she dropped the hoe and went home, but did not tell her husband, Pudho. However she was unable to hide what she had done, for in the evening when they went to bring in the hoe, it lay where she had dropped it, and had done no work. Then the voice of Nyanaye said that as they were now so clever that they knew how to dig, never more would the hoe dig for them. So to this day women is blamed as the one through whose wrongdoing the curse of work came to men.

SL2. However the tradition came into existence it reflects the common tendency of many creation stories to put the blame on the woman,

542 and possibly was invented to keep women in subjection. It has only partly succeeded. Something more potent than a creation story is required to keep many of the LUO women down. Two illustrations suffice to show this. The first in Church. The collection is being taken up, and a man finds himself without any cash. He crosses over to the women's side, whispers a few words to his wife, whereupon she gives him a cent for the collection. Like many a wife in other lands, she holds the purse strings. The second the Law Court. A wife pleads for a divorce from her husband on the ground that he has become a polygamist. She gets her divorce.

543 Much of the apparent inequality is only apparent, not real. The thing which, more than any other, has been quoted as showing the inferior position accorded to women, is the manner in which girls are given in marriage. But this is not so much a matter of sex as of age. If it be true that girls are sometimes given in marriage without their wishes being consulted in the matter, it is also true that many a young man is provided with a wife without his wishes being consulted either. Not so long ago I asked a man what the girl to whom he was engaged was like. He replied that he had never seen her, that the marriage had been arranged by his father. This kind of thing is quite common. And it must not be forgotten that the girl's mother is taken into the fullest consultation when the question of her daughter's betrothal is raised. It is not decided by the men only. And generally there is some form of consultation with the girl. Long and bitter experience has taught the community that to force some girls beyond a certain point is only to lay up trouble for the future. Only three weeks ago a father came to me to ask me to try to mediate in his daughter's affairs. She had been betrothed when quite a young child to a man old enough to be her aged father. He had in due course taken her to wife, and there were two children by the union.
544 Then she left him and consorted with another man, more nearly her own age. I saw the woman, went into the matter and found that the old man was so unsympathetic to her, that even the fact that she had born him two children was not strong enough to reconcile her to her lot. She had much of my sympathy, though I could not condone the desertion of her children.

545 Not even the very strongest bonds can bind a woman who wishes to break them. The most binding form of betrothal known to the LUO, is that which is the outcome of an alliance between two families. The Luo have a proverb which runs " Osiep otho, to wut chiegni." In English it would run " friendship dies, but relationship does not die." So, as in other lands, the heads of two Luo families may desire to cement their friendship by ties of intermarriage. A feast is provided
546 by one of the parties, generally by the one taking the initiative in

the negotiations, which is partaken of in a hut, not outside. To this feast three or four friends of each side are invited as witnesses. When the beer drinking stage has been reached, the company sit round the beer pot in a circle, and the provider of the feast takes the long hollow beer-sucker, puts the end provided with a strainer in the pot, takes a few sucks, and then hands it across to the other party with the invitation to drink if he agrees to a matrimonial alliance between the two families taking place. If the second party desires at the last moment to withdraw he declines to drink, but once having accepted the invitation and completed the contract by drinking, it is as irrevocable as a contract can be. The children thus pledged to marry may be so young that the marriage can not take place for years, or the girl may be a child, while the other may be a man already married. The girl so pledged in this way is known in some parts, as in Asembo, as " nyar suche," " the girl of the beer sucker," and the Luo have no stronger matrimonial contract. It is hedged about with potent penalties, mainly magical, in case of any breach of the contract by either of the parties pledged. But even this most binding of all binding contracts is not invariably kept. Occasionally a girl will not submit to the fate marked out for her, and if she can find a man brave enough to join his fortune with hers, they undergo a ceremony, the essential feature of which is the drinking of " medicine " called " manyasi." This is supposed to render harmless the evils which would otherwise befall them.

Women are by no means so helpless when bound to their husbands as many are inclined to believe. In some ways wives are in a stronger position than are women in lands where magic is not believed in. Luo women have many weapons in their armoury, by which they can bring their husbands into subjection, or perhaps I ought to say, something like subjection. I cannot find that these weapons are resorted to frivolously. A woman has to be hard pushed to bring them into play. One of which we hear a good deal is a curse debarring cohabitation. It is very simple in operation. Striking her thigh with her open palm, the wife vows never to cohabit again. The striking of the thigh is essential. Once this is done dire penalties, sickness of himself and children, will result if the husband attempts to force consent. The fat is now truly in the fire, and the husband has to come to terms with his wife. When he has succeeded in mollifying her " manyasi," the medicine already mentioned, is drunk to break the curse. At this stage of social development a belief in magic does serve the needs of women in certain circumstances. She has powers in connection with agriculture which can be devastating. For instance, during her menses no woman must sow seed. In the family of a polygamist lesser wives dare not approach the " mikayi " or chief wife to share in the labour at this time. Such contact with the seed would prejudice the crop.

241 Similarly, during this time she must be careful where she walks. She
941 can ruin a crop by walking through it. But, of course, in this case, she would suffer with the other members of the family.

462 From early childhood the girl is brought up as an agricultural labourer. There was no class of women divorced from the soil. The
787 only class whose labours in agriculture were lightened were the women
791 who belonged to the divining cult of " SEWE." Sewe is the spirit of divination and is supposed to have descended on those who have been delirious in illness. The delirium is the sign of possession. The devotees of the cult are mainly women, and they are a fairly common sight as they go about their avocation. They are skilled beggars as
[301] well as diviners. With their bodies festooned with strings of beads, shells, bells and other barbaric ornaments, they pass from kraal to kraal, and standing with their bodies leaning forward supported by a
[131] hand resting on a short stick they sing songs of the countryside and and are rewarded by presents of small baskets of grain. In this way women who have been ill are enabled to help to replenish the grain stores, which have probably run low during the illness.

241 Gradually a change is coming over the life of the women, due to
177 white influence. Ploughing by the men with teams of oxen, is setting women free for other tasks. This movement is by no means wide-
252 spread, but it has begun, and its effect on the women has been great.
462 Even if the husband has no team and plough himself, many wives do not rest content until the husband has hired a plough owner to come along and plough up the land. It is not unusual for ploughs to be taken 15 miles for this purpose. Again, the use of hand mills of the " Colonist " type, is easing women of much labour at the grind stones. These are much more common than ploughs, probably there are twenty mills for every plough in use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the mills are turned by hand power, not by oxen. At this labour girls and women take their share, but whereas you would never see a man down on his knees at the grindstone, you do see them turning a mill. New activities are employing the time of many women, and those who have learned to knit or make palm mats in recent years are rapidly increasing in numbers.

CHILD LABOUR:

957 Generally speaking, from early childhood, all are required to make some contribution to the activities of the home. Girls for the fields, and boys for herding, is the broad division of labour, though the boys also lend a hand in the fields, and, very occasionally, a girl or woman may be seen herding. With the opening up of
593 avenues of wage-earning to the boys on coffee and tea estates, and in
[464 other forms of employment, the male child is being made by impecuni-
651] ous parents to make his contribution to the family last year.

593 ous parents to make his contribution to the family hut tax. The most unruly elements, again speaking generally, are those lads when they return to the Reserves, through some of them come back much benefitted in every way so far as one can tell.

PROVISION FOR THE AGED:

888 There is nothing in the social life of the Lue in the way of
178 organized old age relief. The aged look to the younger members of the family to support them. In days gone by when there was no Hut and Poll Tax, and when all the clothing needed was a goatskin, all that the younger members had to provide was food and shelter, with an occasional fee to the medicine man, in the case of illness. Even funerals, when the aged died, were simpler than now. If the parents outlived their offspring there was always the wider circle of the sub-clan or clan to appeal to. And outside the clan were the relations-in-law, upon whom many more claims are made than is customary with us.

But, now, the whole problem of the support of the aged is vastly more difficult, and this in spite of the fact that health measures are beginning to increase the chances of the younger elements surviving to adult life. As against this can be offset the fact that many of the [166] younger members of a family leave the Reserves and remain away for years, and indeed some never are heard of again. Also, there is more than a tendency for the younger generation to go its own way, and commit itself to a more civilized mode of life. There is a definite cleavage between the lives of the younger and the older generations. This is accompanied by weakening ties of common interest and filial duty.

888 Under our regime, and particularly under our system of hut tax,
178 we have driven a wedge into the solidarity of family life which has
651 given a grievous blow to the foundations upon which community life rests. The old are felt to be a burden as never before in the history of the Lue. It is inevitable that more and more burdens should be placed upon the younger elements in tribal life, but we have added to them with, in many cases, a certain element of ruthlessness which is very keenly felt and resented. I quote one instance of what I mean. An old couple in the Reserves with two sons, one a ne'er-do-well a worthless fellow, a jailbird. The other son just rising Poll Tax age. The old couple lived in a rather tumble-down hut, and were known as having no resources, no cattle, sheep or goats. A few fowls formed their "wealth." The old father, while by no means decrepit, was long since past the stage when he could cultivate extensively or go out wage-earning. The old mother had indifferent health, and at times could hardly drag herself back from the well with the pot of

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water. The young son could not find employment and was wandering about trying to scrape together the money for his poll tax. Upon the father came the demand for not tax. He had no money and could not pay. Next year another demand was made, this time for the current year and for that of the previous year. Again he could not pay. The third year he was dunned for three hut taxes, and as he was unable to pay his hut was confiscated to Government, the door was sealed up, and his aged wife driven to seek shelter among neighbours. Homeless, the old man made a frantic effort amongst his relations, who were already liable to pay their own dues, and by dint of much supplication managed to get enough to satisfy the tax for the first of the three years, whereupon his hut was unsealed. Is it any wonder that the younger generation regard the aged as a liability as never before? Demands for hut tax upon the poverious aged is one of the greatest solvents of filial affection in the Reserves to-day, for the burden falls largely on the young.